

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-12 ARA-10 IO-13 /114 W
-----016073 141320Z /40

P 141145Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6676
INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
USMISSION USNATO
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY CARIO
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMEMBASSY MOGODISCIO
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY SANA

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E.O. 11652 N/A
TAGS: SOPN, UR, US, XA
SUBJECT: HORN OF AFRICA: SOVIET PRESS ATTACK PRESIDENT FOR PRESS
CONFERENCE STATEMENT

1. THE SOVIET PRESS HAS REACTED QUICKLY AND NEGATIVELY TO
THE PRESIDENT'S PRESS CONFERENCE STATEMENTS ON THE SITUATION
IN THE HORN OF AFRICA. PRAVDA JANUARY 13 CARRIED A TASS-
WASHINGTON REPORT WHICH IS FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MONTHS
DIRECTLY CRITICIZING THE PRESIDENT PERSONALLY. IT ACCUSES HIM
OF "DELIVERATE DISTORTIONS" OF THE SITUATION AND OF SOVIET
POLICY AND OF MAKING "INAPPROPRIATE" ALLEGATIONS THAT THE
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USSR IS SENDING CUBAN TROOPS INTO ETHIOPIA, "AS IF CUBA
WERE NOT A SOVERIGN STATE". IT IGNORES THE QUESTIONS OF SOVIET
TROOP PRESENCE (AND DOES NOT EVEN ADMIT TO CUBAN PRESENCE)
AND SOVIET ARMS ASSISTANCE TO ETHIOPIA. INSTEAD IT POINTS TO
WESTERN ARMS AID TO SOMALIA, CITING WESTERN PRESS TORIES TO
THE EFFECT THAT SOMALIA IS USING AMERICAN ARMS.

2. AN EVEN STRONGER ARTICLE APPEARED JANUARY 13 ON THE TASS ENGLISH WIRE BY POLITICAL ANALYST YURI KORNILOV (ASSUME DEPARTMENT HAS TASS OR FBIS TEXT). KORNILOV ACCUSES THE PRESIDENT OF MAKING "ABSURD AND ABSOLUTELY IRREVELANT ALLEGATIONS" AND OF "DELIVERATE DISTORTIONS OF THE TRUE STATE OF AFFAIRS WITH A VIEW TO CASTING A SLUR ON THE POSITION OF THE USSR." HE ALSO IGNORES THE QUESTION OF SOVIET TROOPS AND ARMS SUPPLIED THE ETHIOPIANS (AND FOR THAT MATTER SOMALIANS) AND CITING WESTERN PRESS COURCES, CLAIMS THAT THE SAUDI ARABIANS AND OTHER "MIDDLE EASTERN ALLIES OF THE UNITED STATES DELIVER AMERICAN ARMS TO SOMALIA IN UNMARKED CASES". BOTH STORIES PORTRAY THE USSR AS FAVORING A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT PROVIDED THAT THE SOMALIANS WITHDRAW AND THAT TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY IS PRESERVED.

3. COMMENT: OBVIOUSLY THE PRESIDENT HIT A RAW SOVIET NERVE IN HIS PRESS CONFERENCE STATEMENTS AND PRODUCED A RAPID AND VERY NEGATIVE RESPONSE IN THE SOVIET PRESS. WE EXPECT TO SEE MORE COMMENT LIKE THIS IN THE COMING DAYS, FOCUSING ATTENTION ON ARAB AND ALLEGED U.S. SUPPORT FOR SOMALIA AND IGNORING PAST SOVIET AND CUBAN ASSISTANCE TO SOMALIA AND CURRENT MILITARY SUPPORT FOR ETHIOPIA.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, PRESS CONFERENCES, SPEECHES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 14 jan 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978MOSCOW00639
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780022-0217
Format: TEL
From: MOSCOW
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780163/aaaacazk.tel
Line Count: 85
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 9fa663e3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3774539
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: HORN OF AFRICA: SOVIET PRESS ATTACK PRESIDENT FOR PRESS CONFERENCE STATEMENT
TAGS: SOPN, UR, US, XA
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/9fa663e3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014